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ORTHENE®
TURF, TREE &
ORNAMENTAL SPRAY

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ATHLETIC TURF

Kurtz leaves STMA

Kent Kurtz, Ph.D., has resigned as executive director of the Sports Turf Managers Association after four years.

Kurtz, a member of LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT's editorial advisory board, is a professor at Cal Poly/Pomona. With those duties and all the advisory positions he holds, he was finding his schedule too full to continue as executive director. "Four years is a long time, too," he told LM.

Mark Hodnick, president of STMA and supervisor of landscape services at Cal Poly/Pomona, is handling what were Kurtz's responsibilities.

Are you a prudent manager?

If you're worried about being sued by someone who was injured using your field, ask yourself if you manage that field in a reasonably prudent manner, says Elyzabeth J. Holford, J.D., of Virginia Tech University.

"Your duty in a nutshell is to refrain from creating a situation where there is an unreasonable risk of injury," says Holford.

Holford told attendees of the 29th Annual Virginia Turfgrass Conference that lawsuits against athletic field managers are more and more common. That's because of an increase in leisure time, which means more athletes are suffering more injuries; more lawyers "who have no qualms about taking any case to court"; and the "consumeristic" society of today that says: "I paid to use this field so it better be safe."

What can you do to protect yourself? "Often the simplest things are overlooked," says Holford. She stresses the importance of meeting all federal, state and especially local regulations regarding athletic fields. Also:

- clearly post warning and exit signs;
- rehearse evacuation procedures;
- conduct and document regularly scheduled maintenance checks;
- keep a file of all your requests for maintenance and repair, and the responses you received; and
- use quality materials and personnel for turf installation and repair.

"If you can't afford the highest quality people or materials you're telling me you can't afford a lawsuit, yet you're willing to take the risk of incurring one," she adds.

Making playgrounds safer

Though playground equipment ranks fifth on the list of the 100 most hazardous consumer products, there are steps a facility

manager can take to make playground areas safer, says William C. Hoover, Department of Parks and Recreation, City of Charlottesville, Virg.

"It is my opinion that proper design, construction, inspection and maintenance are the key elements in providing a safe and enjoyable playground area," said Hoover at the 28th Virginia Turfgrass Conference.

Important construction considerations include a good drainage system, enclosing the area with a border that is at least eight to 10 feet away from any apparatus and increasing many of the manufacturer's installation recommendations. "We recommend increasing the amount of concrete and the size of holes dug for footing," says Hoover. "All footings should be a minimum of two inches below rough grade finish to avoid problems with the concrete protruding into the finished area."

There are many organic and inorganic materials you can use to provide a surface that offers a maximum cushioning effect. He recommends a combined depth of no less than 10 to 12 inches. "It has been our experience that the most effective surface materials are shredded rubber and pinebark mulch," says Hoover. "The shredded rubber is our best surface because it's safe, has good longevity and durability and is easy to maintain."

Athletes prefer new turf

Researchers at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) say that the new cool-season turf varieties adapted to the Southwest climate provide better cushion and are therefore safer for athletes than existing varieties.

"Results from our study indicate that new perennial ryegrass varieties offer important safety features for football and baseball players, especially during the winter months when Bermudagrasses are dormant," says Stephen T. Cockerham, leader of UCR's sports turf research program.

UCR researchers tested 53 varieties during the four-year study. Citation II was reported to have performed the best under the stress of serious sports traffic, but not statistically better than eight other varieties.

"As improvements continue in the development of cool-season turfgrasses adaptable to the Southwest, sports field management will change dramatically," predicts Cockerham.

Whatever sort of grounds you manage professionally, DIQUAT Herbicide H/A can help you keep them clean and trim. With its fast-acting formula, DIQUAT gives rapid burn-down, usually within 24-48 hours, of a wide variety of annual grasses and broadleaf weeds. DIQUAT has a proven track record for getting rid of unwanted grasses and weeds, even under less-than-ideal weather conditions. A non-selective contact herbicide, DIQUAT will burn back or control nearly anything green to which it is applied.

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